

Section 12: The Deserters

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 90

وَجَاءَ الْمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ
سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

90. “And the dwellers of the desert came with their excuses, that permission might be given to them (to stay back), and those who lied to Allah and His Messenger sat (at home). Soon a painful chastisement shall afflict those of them who disbelieved.”

Some of those People who did not take part in the Holy Struggle had true excuses for which they obtained leave, while some others did not participated in the Holy Struggle without having any exemption, and the abovementioned chastisement is for the second group.

The term /a'rab/, mentioned here, has been applied for some Bedouins who lived in deserts and were far from the city civilization.

However, Holy Struggle is something concerned to Islamic government and it is not a personal affair. That is why both attending in it and leaving it should be done with the permission of the leader of the Muslims. The verse says:

“And the dwellers of the desert came with their excuses, that permission might be given to them, (to stay back)...”

By the way, those who are heedless to the obligatory rule of Holy Struggle and try to escape from it, are liars in their belief. They must know that the seekers of exemption, who try to run away from performing their duty, will be punished and a painful chastisement is waiting for them. The verse continues saying:

“...and those who lied to Allah and His Messenger sat (at home). Soon a painful chastisement shall afflict those of them who disbelieved.”

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 91

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضُّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ مَا يَنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا
نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

91. “There is no fault in the weak and the sick and those who find nothing to spend, so long as they are true to Allah and to His Messenger. There is no way (to blame) against the good-doers and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

A blind old man came to the Prophet (S) and said:

“I have nobody to take my hand and to lead me to the battle-field. I am old and feable. Is my excuse accepted?”

The Prophet (S) kept silence for a while until the abovementioned verse was revealed.

In these recent couple of verses, and the following one, in order to make clear the situation of all groups from the point of being exempted or not in regard to participation in Holy Struggle, there have been defined some proper degrees. At first, it says:

“There is no fault in the weak and the sick and those who find nothing to spend...”

These three groups are excused in any law, and intellect and logic also prove their being exempted. It is certain that in no instance Islamic laws are separate from intellect and logic.

After that, the Qur^{ān} has stated an important condition for the commandment of their being excused. It implies that this is in the condition that they refrain no sincere benediction unto Allah and His Messenger.

“...so long as they are true to Allah and to His Messenger...”

They should encourage the strivers through their own words and behaviour toward Holy Struggle, and to weaken the enemies’ spirit so that they prepare the elementary factors of their failure.

Later, in order to state the reason of this subject, it says that such people are some benevolent men, and there is no way for blaming, scorning, punishing and taking to task the good-doers. The verse says:

“...There is no way (to blame) against the good-doers...”

At the end of the verse, as another reason for these three groups being exempted, the Qur'an points to Allah's two great attributes by saying:

"...Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 92

وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا أَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَا أَجِدُ مَا أَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ تَوَلَّوْا وَأَعْيُنُهُمْ
تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَزَنًا أَلَّا يَجِدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ

92. "Nor (is the task) on those unto whom, when they come unto you to provide them with mounts, you said: 'I do not find means to carry you,' they turned back and their eyes overflowed with tears of sorrow, for they did not find that which they should spend."

In this verse, the Qur'an refers to the fourth group of those who were also exempted from the Holy Struggle. This group had no means to ride on and to participate in the Holy Struggle.

They went to the Prophet (S) to obtain it, but he did not have any mount to give them for carrying them. They had to come back from him while their eyes were full of tears. This tear was for the sorrow which originated from the lack of means to spend it in the way of Allah. The holy verse says:

"Nor (is the task) on those unto whom, when they come unto you to provide them with mounts, you said: 'I do not find means to carry you,' they turned back and their eyes overflowed with tears of sorrow, for they did not find that which they should spend."

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 93

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ
وَطَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

93. "Verily the way (to blame) is only against those who ask you permission (to stay behind) while they are rich. They are content to be with those who stay back, and Allah has set a seal on their hearts, thus they do not know (what they have missed)."

In this verse, the Qur'an explains the fifth group, i.e. those who have never been excused with Allah, and will not be excused in the future either.

It implies that the way of blame and punishment is open only to those who ask you permission not to participate in the Holy Struggle while they are rich and are in welfare. They possess enough possibilities and necessary means for this affair. The verse says:

“Verily the way (to blame) is only against those who ask you permission (to stay behind) while they are rich...”

Then it adds that this disgrace is enough for them that they contented to stay back in Medina with the persons who were feeble, sick, and handicapped and to be deprived from the honour of participation in the battle-field. It says:

“...They are content to be with those who stay back...”

And also this retribution is enough for them that, because of their own ugly deeds, Allah has ceased them from the ability of contemplation and comprehension by sealing their hearts. Therefore, they do not know what kind of excellent ranks they have lost. The verse continues saying:

“...and Allah has set a seal on their hearts, thus they do not know (what they have missed).”

The strong and exalted spirits of the strivers of Islam are vividly made clear from this verse. It illustrates how they preferred and preceded the honour of attending in the battlefield and the honour of martyrdom to any other honours.

This very fact makes manifest one of the important factors of the rapid expansion of Islam at that time and our retardation in this age.

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 94

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَأْنَا اللَّهُ مِنْ
أَخْبَارِكُمْ وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

94. “They will offer you excuses when you return to them. Say: ‘Do not make excuses. We will never believe you. Allah has informed us of tidings about you. And, Allah and His Messenger will see your work, then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the visible, and He will inform you of what you used to do.’”

The hypocrites, who, at any rate, did not participate in the Battle of Tabuk, ceaselessly brought excuses and pretexts to the Prophet of Islam (S). This verse, rejecting their seeking for excuses, indicates that

when the Muslims would return from the war, the hypocrites would come to them and bring some excuses.

The Muslims should say to them not to make not to excuse, since they would not believe them and Allah had informed them of their circumstance. The verse says:

“They will offer you excuses when you return to them. Say: ‘Do not make excuses. We will never believe you. Allah has informed us of tidings about you...’”

This meaning is a hint to the fact that, by means of the verses of the Qur’ān and revelation, Allah (s.w.t.) discovered the plots and secrets of the hypocrites and He informed His Messenger (S) of their actions, so that the Prophet (S) knew that those excuses were made only to confuse the matter.

They did not have a proper and safe belief in Allah and the religion. And their absence in the Holy Struggle was for the same reason.

Then, in the continuation of the verse, the Qur’ān says:

“...And, Allah and His Messenger will see your work, then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the visible, and He will inform you of what you used to do’.”

That moment of the return to the Knower, which is mentioned in the verse, is the time of death, when the curtains will be utterly removed and human beings will understand the facts.

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 95

سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَتُعَرِّضُوا عَنْهُمْ فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ رِجْسٌ
وَمَا وَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

95. “They will swear to you by Allah, when you turn back unto them that you renounce them (their sin). So renounce them, for they are indeed filth and their abode is Hell, a recompense for what they used to earn.”

After the occurrence of the Battle of Tabūk, when the Muslims returned to Medina, those hypocrites who had not participated in that Battle, in order to justify their action, came to them swearing that they had plausible excuse. This oath was for that the Muslims might not blame them.

The Qur’ān informs the Muslims in this verse that when they return from the Holy Struggle, the hypocrites come to them and swear by Allah to justify their deed in order that the Muslims renounce them their sin and do not blame them.

But Muslims are commanded to turn away from them, i.e. as a protest to their ugly work, they must avoid speaking with them. Then the Qur'an states its reason such that, as a result of their own action, their abode is Hell.

However, renouncement is often fulfilled either upon nobility and connivance, or upon wrath and heedlessness. In this verse, it has been used in both senses. The hypocrites asked for remittal and pardoning their fault, and Allah had commanded the Muslims to have a wrathful renouncement unto them.

When the Messenger of Allah (S) returned from the Battle of Tabuk, he told the Muslims not to associate with the hypocrites who abandoned going to the Battle. 1

But some commentators have said that renouncement is based on remittal and pardoning, without blaming them or scorning them. It should be done in a manner that you do not attest them in what they bring excuse, but by silence and negation you do reject them, because they are filthy and it appropriates that you do not approach them. So, their abode is Hell for what they have done.2

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 96

يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ
الْفَاسِقِينَ

96. “They swear to you that you may be pleased with them. But even if you are pleased with them, yet surely Allah will not be pleased with the transgressing people.”

In this verse, the Qur'an continues the subject matter of the previous verse. It says that the hypocrites swear so that the Muslims may be pleased with them. But they must be aware that even if they are pleased with them, Allah will not be pleased with the mischievous ones. The verse says:

“They swear to you that you may be pleased with them. But even if you are pleased with them, yet surely Allah will not be pleased with the transgressing people.”

This statement means that even when you become pleased with such hypocrites, it does not benefit them in their state, because Allah is not pleased with them.

However, this meaning is a warning, indicating that when Allah is not pleased with a person, a believer should not be pleased with him either, and he must cease his communication with him.

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 97

الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ
عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

97. “The Bedouins are more hard in disbelief and hypocrisy, and more apt not to know the limits of what Allah has sent down to His Messenger, and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

This verse attracts the believers’ attention to this matter that the hypocrites of the Bedouins, who lived in deserts and outside of Medina, were more intense than the hypocrites of the citizens settled inside Medina, from the point of disbelief and hypocrisy.

They were also in a lower standard from the point of understanding and perceiving the ordinances and the limits of Allah which had been revealed to the Prophet (S). That was why they opposed more to embrace Islam. The verse says:

“The Bedouins are more hard in disbelief and hypocrisy, and more apt not to know the limits of what Allah has sent down to His Messenger...”

Then, at the end of the verse, the Qur’ān adds that ‘**Allah is All-Knowing**’, viz., He is aware of the reality of the state of everyone; and He is ‘**All-Wise**’, viz., the revelations He sends down are all formed upon wisdom and cognizance. It says:

“...and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 98

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَائِرَ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

98. “And of the Bedouins are those who take what they spend to be a loss, and they wait for calamities against you, on them shall be an evil calamity; and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”

In this verse, the Qur’ān states that some of the Bedouins consider that what they spend in charity is as a kind of loss and a damage. They are hypocrites, of course, and they do not spend believably. They spend for protecting the outward aspect and in the form of hypocritical acts, so they know it as a loss for themselves. They do not believe in the rewards of the Hereafter.

“And of the Bedouins are those who take what they spend to be a loss...”

Moreover, those hypocrites who lived at the time of the Prophet (S) waited for arriving some horrible calamities against the Muslims. They awaited the death of the Prophet (S) momentarily, or that the Muslims be defeated and scattered so that they could make their inward aims manifest freely.

This fact was proved after the departure of the Prophet of Islam (S) when some parties of those hypocrites turned away from Islam and apostatized. The verse continues saying:

“...and they wait for calamities against you...”

The holy verse, after mentioning the expectation of the hypocrites, curses them and says:

“...on them shall be an evil calamity...”

Then it also continues saying:

“...and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”

That is, Allah hears all their words, and He (s.w.t.) is aware of all their secrets.

Surah At-Tawbah – Verse 99

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبَاتٍ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ أَلَّا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

99. “And of the Bedouins are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and take what they spend to be (means of) the nearness to Allah and the prayers (blessings) of the Messenger. Look! Surely they are means of nearness for them. Soon Allah will admit them into His mercy. Verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

Opposite to those Bedouins of Arab who were hypocrites, the Qurʾān refers to another group of the Bedouins who had a true Faith in Allah and the Day of Resurrection. This reference is for the reason that no one considers that all of the Bedouins were always totally hypocrites and disbelievers. The verse says:

“And of the Bedouins are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day...”

As a result of the Faith they had in Allah, this group of Bedouins of Arabs spent their wealth in charity in the way of Allah. So, whatever they spent in charity they assumed it as a means of nearness to Allah and, also, an attraction of the prayers of the Prophet (S). The verse continues saying:

“...and take what they spend to be (means of) the nearness to Allah and the prayers (blessings) of the Messenger...”

These Bedouins believed that spending properties in the way of Allah caused both the nearness to Allah and that the Prophet (S) would pray for them; since the Prophet (S) used to pray for any one of the believers who spent in charity in the way of Allah, and therefore, he encouraged him thereby.

The behaviour of these faithful Bedouins can be compared with that of the hypocritical Bedouins. These considered what they spent in charity as a means of nearness to Allah, while the former group, as was explained in the previous verses, considered their charities a kind of loss, since they did not believe in Allah’s rewards.

Therefore, in the continuation of the holy verse, the Qur’ān says:

“...Look! Surely they are means of nearness for them...”

There is no distance, of course, between Man and the Lord. Then the purpose of this ‘***nearness***’ is ‘***a spiritual nearness***’, and that a faithful person ought to create the epithets of Allah inside himself.

It is in this case that he may be involved in the mercy and favour of Allah (s.w.t.), and can enjoy His rewards. We see that in this holy very verse, after confirming that their charities cause the nearness to Him, the Qur’ān immediately says:

“...Soon Allah will admit them into His mercy...”

And, by this phrase, the Qur’ān states the fruit of the nearness to Allah. So, the verse concludes as follows:

“...Verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

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1. Books of by Imam Fakhr-i-Rāzi, Marqāfi, Majma‘-ul-Bayān, Al-Minār, Fi-Zillal, Atyab-ul-Bayān, Al-Muharrir- ul-Wajiz
 2. Tafsir-i-Qarīb-ul-Qur’ān, As-Sūfi, Jawāmi‘-ul-Jāmi‘, Al-Mizān, and Manhaj-us-Sādiqin
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